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Stuart, Henry Harvey

Manual training, domestic science and civics

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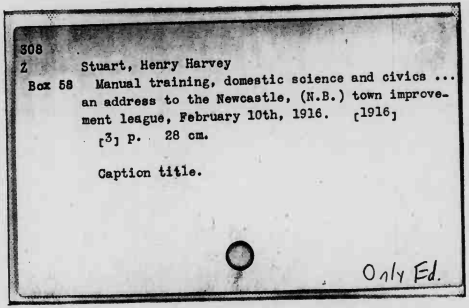
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STUART
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MANUAL TRAINING,
DOMESTIC SCIENCE
AND CIVICS

Oxford
STOCK No. 152½
MADE IN U. S. A.

Manual Training, Domestic Science and Civics

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BY HENRY HARVEY STUART

An Address to the Newcastle, (N. B.) Town Improvement League, February 10th, 1916.

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen:

There can be no more important question than that of Education, for on the kind and quantity of education received by its young people the welfare of a nation depends more than on anything else.

Other things being equal, the nation that spends most per capita for education always occupies the leading place. A large population, unlimited territory and vast resources will not sustain a people if education be lacking. Empires have had all three and yet have gone down easily and irrecoverably before a much smaller and poorer, but wiser, foe. We in Canada have all the land and all the natural resources we need, and a sufficient number of people can be secured faster than we can assimilate them. What we lack is an adequate system of education. What we have in that line is very good, so far as it goes, but it does not go far enough, and its benefits are by no means evenly distributed. Most of our children leave school before they do more than finish Grade Seven of the graded course or its ungraded equivalent. Many never reach Grade Seven, and many do not attend school at all.

Medical Inspection—a most necessary thing—is authorized for the schools of New Brunswick, but is left optional for each district. And few, if any, districts have arranged to have such inspection made. As a result, many children, who are only slightly defective when they enter school, become weaker and weaker and less and less able to benefit by the instruction given.

So, too, with compulsory attendance at school. Each district may or may not vote itself under the Act, as it pleases. Some take no notice of the Act. Some adopt it, but take no steps to enforce it. Others appoint Truant Officers but care not whether they do their work or not. And the Act itself is defective. It stipulates that children must attend school until they are sixteen years of age, or have passed Grade Seven —unless their parents or guardians are so situated as to need their help at an earlier stage. Why such exception, unless to make it easy for certain persons or firms to obtain cheap labor? Why should the children of the very poor be allowed to miss the opportunity of getting the same education as others receive? Why shouldn't the public see that all have equal opportunity? Let those unable to send their children to school be assisted to do so—let those unwilling to send them be compelled. And let no normal child leave school till he has passed, at least, the Eighth Grade. A graduate of Grade Seven is very poorly fitted for useful citizenship.

The subjects prescribed for our schools are many, yet none of those laid down for grade one to eight can be profitably eliminated. Reading, writing arithmetic, algebra and bookkeeping; English Grammar, Composition and Literature; Latin, Geography and History, are all necessary, all essential to the production of thinking men and women. Yet, they do not necessarily teach the pupil how to do things—to handle machinery and fight the battle of life. Something more is needed—something more concrete—something more practical—not instead of the above, but in addition thereto.

These additional subjects required are already authorized. We already have on the prescribed curriculum the subjects of Drawing, Physics, Chemistry, Agriculture, etc., and provision made for each school taking up Manual Training, Domestic Science and School Gardening whenever its ratepayers or Trustees so determine. Our provincial Board of Education has authorized and is encouraging the teaching of such subjects, helping each Teacher to obtain the required knowledge and financially assisting each district complying with the conditions enjoined. The Board is doing its part. The danger is that our people, having an option, may long neglect to grasp the opportunity knocking at their gates—may neglect until the leadership which might have been theirs has passed into other hands.

Efficiency is the order of the day. Without it we must be content with the place of a serf or a slave to the one who has it. The nation whose citizens can do things is the only virile nation and the only one likely to long retain its independence. Sooner or later the ownership of the world goes to the worker. The men who actually work the land ultimately, if properly organized, oust the idle landlords, as the man who runs the machine must ultimately dispossess the mere owner thereof.

German power today is due less to the prowess of her soldiers than to the skill and organization of her people. Her schools have produced a whole nation of skilled workers. The children have been trained in experi-

mental science in the common schools and on leaving the latter, they have stepped into the technical schools of the particular trades they favored. The result was that all the available workers of Germany were employed in the higher processes of agriculture, manfacture and trade, unskilled Slavs and Italians being imported for the labor that required only muscular effort.

For that efficiency, which enabled Germany in a single century to rise from national poverty to great national wealth and from a position of helpless political division to one of Imperial unity and marvellous strength, we are paying heavily today and must pay still heavier until we adopt better methods.

What do our schools need to make them as good as the best and enable our boys and girls to take their proper place in life?

One thing they need is the practical application in each district of the authorized course of study in Manual Training and Domestic Science. Many pupils, who are not drawn to the old fashioned subjects but rather wearied thereby, would take at once to manual work and be able to fix upon a useful life work. Thus between the old and the new courses, practically all pupils would be able to find congenial studies and to fit themselves for honorable and productive citizenship. How many unskilled men we have because of this lack in the schools! How many misfits and failures in life! How many young women who marry without any knowledge of cooking and housekeeping, and thus wreck the homes they might have built up into models of comfort and culture!

Manual instruction in the common schools would be naturally supplemented by technical schools which would afford an opportunity of finishing the youth's education in any particular branch he wished to pursue.

Examples of Manual Training and Domestic Science departments in successful operation may be seen in the Maritime Colleges, and in the public schools of several N. B. towns including Chatham.

And such instruction, and all instruction, should be for all—not one deprived of its advantages. We want no uneducated class, however small—no class condemned to ignorance and the social inferiority and political degradation that inevitably follows.

Now, merely intellectual and industrial education alone will not suffice. True education has a moral side, but as this is supposed to be attended to in all schools, we shall not dwell upon it here.

The aim of education is not only to provide learned and practical, but good, citizens as well. So, in addition to all the subjects above mentioned, one thing more is needed in course of study—Civics. This also is authorized and encouraged by the Board of Education, questions from it being asked on all Government examinations above Grade Seven, but its teaching is not yet obligatory—purely optional—and hence, among our easy-going people, not adopted except in a very few schools.

CIVICS

The prescribed text (R. S. Jenkins' Canadian Civics), is an admirable one, covering, directly or indirectly, all the points of importance. It is very thorough. It first takes up the Earth as a whole, dividing it into countries, great and small, and noticing their different kinds of government. Then our Dominion—its constitution and government, the cause and principles of our political parties, the intricacies of political platforms, conventions and other meetings, the manner of selecting and nominating candidates, the manner of voting, the duties and powers of each department of the government—is fully described.

The chapter on Taxation and the National Debt is a good one. Its discussion of the basic principles of the tariff, Protection and Free Trade, is unbiased, and the way in which the Dominion revenues are raised is made perfectly plain.

Following that of the Dominion political system comes an explanation of the Provincial system, then of the Municipality. Then the procedure of the Law Courts is described, then the Educational system, and the book closes with a few well chosen words on the duties of the citizen.

The questions asked on each topic and the supplementary reading advised and rendered imperative by the questions, combine to make our Civics text book, one of the finest school texts ever authorized.

The average citizen, knowing little or nothing about the principles underlying Taxation, our political parties and the complexity of government, is easily deceived regarding the conduct of public affairs. Teach the child Civics and you take a long step in the direction of overcoming the helplessness of many voters.

Most citizens object to paying taxes, not, let us hope, because of inherent unwillingness to bear their fair share of the public expenses, but because they do not understand how the taxes are apportioned and why so much is needed, or because they suspect that they are not fairly apportioned or impartially collected.

Failure to understand the real difference between direct and indirect taxation is responsible for much of our political trouble.

The widespread ignorance of the rules of debate and parliamentary procedure, which rules are taught in our Civics text, prevents intelligent expression of opinion at many public meeting.

Our democracy, in so far as our government is a democracy, is on trial. If it is to last, we must have an educated people. In ancient Athens, the system of education was so perfect that the time came when it was a matter of indifference whether the officials were elected or chosen by lot; as most every citizen was qualified. Yet Athens fell ingloriously. Why? Well, her citizens were all well trained, but who were her citizens? No woman was a full citizen, and girls were not given the opportunity of obtaining the same education as a boy. Women being kept in inferiority and ignorance, the mental and moral and even the physical stamina of the men finally deteriorated. And a very large proportion of the men, being slaves, got no education at all, except manual and were accorded neither political nor civil rights. With these two handicaps Athenian civilization, the most glorious of the ancient world's, broke down and passed off the stage. Had Athens, in time, given equality of opportunity to ALL her people, her history might have been very different from what it is.

That nation will finally triumph which spends most money on, and takes most interest in, Education—if that Education be not only material but moral and spiritual as well. Democracies must learn to bear and forbear, to labor and to wait, hence their citizens must be wise.

Great national resources, a numerous population and unlimited wealth will not avail to save from destruction the nation that has not developed good citizenship. Ignorance is as dangerous to us as it ever was to the dead civilization of former days.

Compulsory attendance at school may be enforced by all districts, but it is not. Why? Some people, ignorant of the principles of Civics, are indifferent to their children's education, and make no struggle against the conditions that allow or compel them to leave school too early. Others, who know the fatal effects of ignorance, and have the power to remedy the conditions that breed it, encourage the disregard of the law and frown upon any honest attempt to enforce it, because its non enforcement enables them to obtain child labor cheap and thereby make great gain for themselves.

As the ancient democracies went down, largely because they denied equality of opportunity to a portion of their people, so must our institutions crumble and our power pass into other hands unless we see that all the boys and girls of our land have an equal opportunity in life—that no necessities of their parents that can be relieved by the State are allowed to stand between them and a good education—that they obtain the Education that will enable them not only to think clearly but to actually do things—that none be allowed to enter upon the duties of life unskilled.

But the question arises: If all are trained in citizenship and become skilled workmen, who will do the hardest and dirtiest work hitherto done by the ignorant and unskilled? This question is easily answered. The hardest and dirtiest work, the doer of which is now the poorest paid and least respected, could be disposed of in anyone of three ways. Let each citizen do his own share, or let it be done by turn, or let the hardest and dirtiest work be accompanied by the highest pay, and, if necessary, the highest honor. Let each child be taught that manual work is as honorable as any other and that the best citizen is he or she that is of most use in the community.

While the whole school curriculum is of great value, Civics is an essential study that cannot be neglected without seriously endangering the stability of the nation and inviting disaster.

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